

Troping the Asylum

must have been made to discredit Mrs. Mannering, for Mr. Mannering is reported to have confessed that "he got all the information from his wife." Clark offers us some of her discourse, second-hand and discredited: "It was quite evident his wife mixed fancies with facts, for he says she told him that when he came she 'felt like a whipped cur + dare not speak to him for fear of doing something wrong. She was afraid the nurses might scold her.'" Clark concludes that she "mixed up her morbid fears with every day occurrences," and that therefore "the Charges were unfounded" (135).

Some cases were more concrete. Clark describes what he saw when he went into Ward 6 on the afternoon of November 20, 1881:

found a patient recently admitted laying on his back on the [illegible]. His name is [illegible]. Supervisor R. McCreary had him by the [illegible] + attendant Elliott had him by the [illegible] + his knee on his chest. This alone [?] might be necessary [?] to secure him against [illegible] but he was "kneeing" his chest with his knee + for this I discharged. There was no necessity for such treatment. McCreary Supr. says that before I came he told the attendant he would report him for it. As McCreary has been always kind with the patients + as I saw no wrong treatment on his part, I gave him the benefit of a doubt with a warning.... (191)

Abuse, like that complained about by Thomas Merton below, could be entirely physical, or sexual as in the Bedson Case, also discussed from various viewpoints below, or the case of Clifford Freeman. On the evening of November 29, 1881, Clark learned that Clifford Freeman, an Attendant, had broadcast spying on two patients, Mrs. Black and Pat Heron, "in blacksmith shop in an improper manner together. He states positively there was no carnal connection." Clark obviously suspects that something improper was occurring, and blames Freeman for neither preventing it nor reporting the incident. "He acknowledges that he stood + watched them for a time + made no effort to separate them until it was evident -- that sexual connection would take place, + then he separated them." Clark discharged Freeman and gave strict orders that the adventuresome Mrs. Black was not be let "out of ward alone" (196). It is interesting that Clark would punish Freeman for conniving at sexual abuse but forgive McCreary for doing virtually the same thing in a case of physical abuse.